

BETH ANN FENNELLY

## The Mommy at the Zoo

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I used to sleep better I used to  
be smarter remember for example words  
and remember when I learned them

there was a word for example  
for the way a snake loves  
a tight place a crevice a chink in rocks

now the word won't answer  
though my daughter knocks  
the python sleeps tight in his glass hut

the word has slipped  
my mind between a rock  
and a hard place

Mr. Snake you  
you are a . . .  
a something-o-phile

O you sneaky . . .  
something-o-phile . . .  
I rummage

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but the word  
is nowhere no  
where in my diaper bag

among the handiwipes and gummy bears  
sippie cups of Juicy Juice  
crayons slinky and cow-that-goes-moo

before I was a mommy  
say four or five years or  
decades ago I could think in complete

sentences remember all  
my favorite words like the one  
about loving the tight fit which I did

in the French Quarter  
where the hot rain rained down  
in the alley beside the bar

where I was bolted against the iron gate  
by Tommy's hard cock  
hot rain falling on my upswung face

each vertebra fenced  
in the tic-tac-toe grid  
each vertebra X-ed

on a treasure map  
bezel set what a night  
for a girl forged of carbon

all bone and saxophone  
notes bouncing to her  
through the hot drops of rain

who was she  
that fresh-squeezed girl  
merely temporarily out of her mind

if it's true as they say  
that I am now  
that same she

the word I seek  
would come slithering  
find a chink and wriggle in

like my child up ahead  
darting through scissors  
of grown-up legs

her silhouette  
in red exit light  
slow down I'm coming wait

wait up